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ABSTRACT

The Center for Prevention of School Violence, the national clearinghouse for Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE), developed a profile of SAVE chapters, which involve students in school and community violence prevention efforts. This report provides background information about SAVE and reviews the literature addressing school connectedness and meaningful school involvement. It describes the development, intent, and design of the profile questionnaire and presents the findings which, taken together, establish the baseline profile. To generate the profile, 580 questionnaires were mailed to SAVE advisors in fall 2000, with a response rate of 30 percent. Advisors described their roles, chapter composition, and chapter activities. Results indicate that most SAVE advisors are counselors, School Resource Officers, or teachers. SAVE chapter enrollment reflects about 12 percent of total student enrollment at the schools in which chapters exist. SAVE chapters tend to be initiated for the purpose of preventing school violence. The main challenges associated with SAVE include obtaining financial support and maintaining student involvement. Differences between elementary and secondary SAVE programs are apparent, with elementary projects less challenging to implement. Recommendations for SAVE include increased training for advisors, increased involvement with other school and community activities, and emphasis on SAVE's proactive nature. (Contains 13 references.) (SM)

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Students Against Violence Everywhere: A National Profile

prepared by

Center for the Prevention of School Violence
Raleigh, North Carolina

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The Center for the Prevention of School Violence acknowledges the efforts of Students Against Violence Everywhere (S.A.V.E.) chapters throughout the United States. We are particularly grateful to the S.A.V.E. chapter advisors who responded to the profile questionnaire which is the basis for this report.

The Center also acknowledges the support of S.A.V.E. which Chevrolet is providing. This support played a role in supporting the research which is the basis for this report. Chevrolet is supporting S.A.V.E. as part of its community relations initiative Chevy R.O.C.K.: Reaching Out to Communities and Kids. Chevy R.O.C.K. is an initiative dedicated to providing young people with the life skills, experiences, and resources they need to become positive members in their community and role models to their peers. Chevy R.O.C.K. is Chevrolet's response to the nation's top priority of providing children with safe schools and communities to ensure they develop the skills needed to grow to their full potential.

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Executive Summary

The Center for the Prevention of School Violence, the national clearinghouse for Students Against Violence Everywhere (S.A.V.E.), undertook research to develop a profile of S.A.V.E. chapters. These chapters exist to involve students in school and community violence prevention efforts. The first S.A.V.E. chapter was established by students in 1989 in Charlotte, North Carolina, after the murder of a fellow student at a Friday night gathering.

The Center's generation of the S.A.V.E. profile allows for the development of baseline information about S.A.V.E. chapters. The Center's research also allows for development of best practices for the operation of S.A.V.E. chapters as well as will assist the Center in determining the effectiveness of S.A.V.E. in efforts to make schools safer. Finally, it holds promise with regard to strategies which need to be pursued to promote the growth of S.A.V.E. chapters across the United States.

This report provides background information about S.A.V.E. and offers a brief review of the literature which addresses school connectedness and meaningful student involvement. It reviews the profile questionnaire's development, intent, and design and provides descriptive univariate results as well as some bivariate analysis which, taken together, establish the baseline profile. Some of the more interesting findings culled from open-ended questions are presented, and, finally, recommendations concerning the implementation of S.A.V.E. and future S.A.V.E. research are offered.

To generate the profile, five-hundred-eighty questionnaires were mailed to S.A.V.E. advisors in Fall, 2000. A response rate of thirty percent was obtained. Advisors responded to questions about their roles, chapter composition, and chapter activities. Highlights from the analyses which were performed on questionnaire responses include:

- Most S.A.V.E. advisors are counselors, School Resource Officers (specially trained certified law enforcement officers who work in schools), or teachers.
- S.A.V.E. chapter enrollment reflects about twelve percent of total student enrollment at the schools in which chapters exist.
- Just under a majority of chapters are two years old or less and therefore are considered "newer."
- S.A.V.E. chapters tend to be initiated for the purpose of "preventing school violence," and, importantly, eighty-six percent of advisors responded that S.A.V.E. makes their schools "safer."
- S.A.V.E. chapter activities include school rallies, the Center for the Prevention of School Violence's annual S.A.V.E. summit, participation in school-wide pledges of nonviolence, and observations of weeks set aside for emphasis of nonviolence and safer schools; S.A.V.E. projects include service learning efforts, guest speaker visits, and training in conflict management and peer mediation.
- The "biggest challenges" associated with S.A.V.E., particularly at the middle and high school levels, are obtaining financial support and maintaining student involvement.
- Differences between elementary S.A.V.E. and middle/high school S.A.V.E. are found in several areas with perhaps the most interesting being that projects tend to be different between the levels and elementary S.A.V.E. appears less challenging to implement.
- Differences between newer and older chapters are minimal with the most important being that administrators were more likely to be the initiators of newer chapters and counselors more likely to be the advisors of these chapters.

Recommendations for S.A.V.E. include increased training for advisors, increased involvement with other school and community activities, exploration of a secondary S.A.V.E. curriculum, coordination of S.A.V.E. with other school violence prevention efforts, attention paid to the biggest challenges S.A.V.E. must meet, enhancement of recruiting strategies, emphasis of the proactive nature of S.A.V.E. chapter initiation, and establishment of a national S.A.V.E. support structure.

The Center for the Prevention of School Violence's intent to conduct follow-up research is mentioned. Additional work to enhance the baseline information, particularly increasing questionnaire response rate, in future profile efforts so that generalizations from it can be more confidently presented is also indicated.

Introduction

Students Against Violence Everywhere (S.A.V.E.) is a student involvement approach which is intended to promote nonviolence within schools and communities. In 1989, in response to the murder of Alex Orange, a West Charlotte High School student, students established the first S.A.V.E. chapter. The purpose and motivation of S.A.V.E. is for students to work together in the prevention of school and community violence.

Since 1989, S.A.V.E. has grown from its beginnings at West Charlotte High School to a membership of more than 70,000 students. S.A.V.E.'s membership includes students from all grade levels. Twenty-four percent of S.A.V.E. chapters are registered at elementary schools, thirty percent are registered at middle schools, and thirty-nine percent exist in high schools (seven percent are in alternative learning programs or in non-school settings). Generally, middle and high school S.A.V.E. chapters operate as extra-curricular activities. At the elementary level, S.A.V.E. is typically infused into ongoing school safety efforts.

Through the introduction of S.A.V.E. into the academic setting, S.A.V.E. provides education about the effects and consequences of violence as well as informs students about alternatives to violence. S.A.V.E. chapters also promote the movement of nonviolence through extra-curricular activities such as school-wide and community events.

The Center for the Prevention of School Violence is the national clearinghouse for S.A.V.E. As the clearinghouse, the Center designs and publishes educational and awareness materials to promote S.A.V.E. The Center tracks the growing membership of S.A.V.E., issues membership cards to registered chapters, and provides training to schools interested in starting chapters. S.A.V.E. is also highlighted on the Center's Safe School Pyramid as a promising strategy for preventing school violence.

The Center undertook a research project designed to generate a profile of S.A.V.E. chapters. The profile provides baseline information about the chapters. It will allow the Center to develop best practices for the operation of S.A.V.E. chapters and assist the Center in determining the effectiveness of S.A.V.E. in efforts to make schools safer. Finally, the profile information will enable the Center to identify strategies for the promotion of S.A.V.E.'s growth across the United States.

The following report provides an overview of the profile information. The report reviews the background of S.A.V.E. and considers the importance of school connectedness and meaningful student participation in their schools. The development, intent, and implementation of the profile questionnaire as well as descriptive analyses of the questionnaire results are also discussed. Interesting findings are reported from open-ended questions, and, finally, recommendations are offered with regard to S.A.V.E. chapters, best practices, and S.A.V.E. growth. Future research by the Center for the Prevention of School Violence is also discussed.

S.A.V.E. Background

Before examining existing literature and presenting the baseline profile information, a quick review of S.A.V.E.'s background is appropriate. As referenced in the introduction, S.A.V.E. was started by students in Charlotte, North Carolina, after a classmate hade been killed. S.A.V.E. chapters were begun over the next few years in and around Charlotte, and, in 1993, the Center for the Prevention of School Violence was asked by those involved in S.A.V.E. to assist efforts to promote and provide program assistance to S.A.V.E. The Center held the first statewide workshops on how to implement S.A.V.E. in 1994 and took over as the clearinghouse for S.A.V.E. chapter registration. In 1995, the first two non-North Carolina S.A.V.E. chapters, from Alabama and Georgia, registered with the Center. A critical event occurred in 1996 with the Center's first provision of the annual S.A.V.E. summit. In 1999, S.A.V.E. achieved another milestone by having the first chapter register from outside the United States. Today the Center has over 600 registered chapters in its data base with over 70,000 members in 30 states and Canada.

S.A.V.E.'s message through this time period has been remarkably consistent. From its beginnings as a program started by students to today, its focus on students as its driving force has been maintained. Even the elementary S.A.V.E. approach which involves more adult supervision because of student ages emphasizes how students can and should be involved in efforts to make their schools and communities safer for themselves and others. Increasingly the literature in this area is demonstrating how beneficial such a student focus can be.

Literature Review

Since the violent incident in Littleton, Colorado, in 1999, schools and communities have more explicitly recognized the need and importance of school safety. As a result, extensive research has been conducted to identify protective factors to build resiliency in today's youth. Two specific factors identified as strong builders of resiliency are school connectedness and meaningful participation. School connectedness is the development of a bond between students and their school, students feeling a part of a larger whole. Meaningful participation is the time when youth are given the opportunity to take on roles of responsibility for themselves and their environment with the assistance and guidance of an adult; it is the time when youth can reflect on their future and set expectations as well as establish and express one's identity. Through developing resiliency, students are able to adapt and bounce back from difficult and challenging experiences (Barr & Parrett, chap.7; Benard, 1995; Clark, 1995; Krovetz, 1999; Maeroff, chap. 2; Milstein & Henry, chap. 1).

In schools, student involvement in constructive activities is recognized as a vehicle for school connectedness and meaningful participation. Constructive activities provide students the opportunity to express their individual ideologies. These activities also provide the chance for students to establish a support network, to become involved with events that are valued by others, and to work through challenging experiences. Research has shown that organized activities have a direct link to an increase in positive behaviors of youth. For instance, students involved with constructive activities have reported an increase in self-concept and academic aspirations. However, these activities not only allow students to grow individually; constructive activities also create the opportunity for students to form a relationship with their school, take responsibility for their school, and contribute to the well-being of their school. (Eccles & Barber, 1999).

Through constructive activities, students are engaging in school connectedness and meaningful participation while simultaneously developing resiliency traits (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Milstein & Henry, chap. 1).

Student connectedness occurs when students identify themselves as an important part of the larger whole; they understand their importance and role in the school. When students participate meaningfully, they have the opportunity to learn and develop the skills necessary to work with others. Ultimately, through structured activities, school connectedness and meaningful participation provide and promote student empowerment. Such empowerment enables students to take the role of change agents in their schools (Barr & Parrett, chap. 7; Benard, 1995; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Maeroff, chap. 2).

In contrast to the noted benefits of constructive activities, research reports forty percent of young adolescents' time is spent in unstructured and non-directed activities or activities that have no real purpose. The majority of this time is reported hanging out with peers and engaging in delinquent behaviors ("Support for Teens", 2000; "Study Debunks"; 2000, National Association of Attorneys General, 2000). In Who's Who 29th Annual Survey of High Achievers, students reported peer pressure as the largest factor affecting the level of school violence at thirty-one percent. Instead, peer pressure must become a medium to promote school safety among students, not perpetuate school violence. Research has documented that organized activities reinforce and facilitate positive peer pressure through shared goals and experiences (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Ultimately, constructive activities allow students to become change agents in the promotion of school safety through awareness of the prevention of school violence and building positive peer relationships.

Recognizing the positive impact of student involvement in constructive activities and the importance of student involvement, a student-focused approach can be taken in promoting safe schools. With the guidance of an adult, students are given the chance to take ownership of their school; students taking the responsibility for promoting safety in their schools.

In 1989, a constructive activity was established that gave students the opportunity to take the responsibility and ownership of their school through the promotion of nonviolence. This student focused activity was Students Against Violence Everywhere (S.A.V.E.). S.A.V.E. is a student approach that fosters positive peer pressure as well as builds school connectedness and meaningful participation.

The purpose of this research is to generate a profile of S.A.V.E. chapters. The S.A.V.E. profile will provide information on the development of S.A.V.E. chapters, the type of activities in which S.A.V.E. chapters engage, and the methods and techniques used by S.A.V.E. chapters to promote student involvement. Ultimately, this information will make available S.A.V.E. best practices for schools and communities which are searching for a program that empowers students to become more involved in the effort to make schools and communities safer.

The Development, Intent, and Design of the Questionnaire

The Center for the Prevention of School Violence developed the Students Against Violence Everywhere Questionnaire for the purpose of creating a profile of S.A.V.E. chapters. The profile questionnaire was developed to obtain information about chapter advisor roles, chapter composition, and chapter activities. The questionnaire was constructed with thirty different closed-ended questions. In this form of questioning, respondents are given five to six answers to choose from of which they could check as many as apply to their chapters. Respondents were also given the added choice of "other" and could write their own answers in with regard to this choice. This form of questioning was used to create consistency in the data collection process by limiting the number of choices a responder had to choose from while at the same time not limiting their response capability. The questionnaire also included a number of open-ended questions where the respondent did not receive any answers from which to choose but rather was given the opportunity to write responses. It was necessary to ask these questions to capture that information which makes each S.A.V.E. chapter unique. The questionnaire is atttached (see attachment A).

The questionnaire was mailed in Fall, 2000, to five hundred and eighty chapter advisors who were asked to respond promptly. A second mailing and "call-backs" to advisors to solicit responses ultimately generated a response rate of thirty percent. Nineteen percent came from elementary schools, thirty-three percent from middle schools, almost forty-eight percent from high schools, and a small percentage came from alternative learning programs and non-school settings. Although a low response rate overall, the mixture of schools does somewhat reflect the universe of S.A.V.E. chapters with the most in existence at the high school level and the least at the elementary school level. The chapters which responded exist in twenty-one states and Canada. The bulk of responses came from chapters in North Carolina which also is home to most existing S.A.V.E. chapters.

Questionnaire Results - Univariate Analysis

Univariate analysis helps generate a profile of S.A.V.E.chapters by focusing on specific single question results with the intent of developing a baseline of information. The following information focuses on three main areas: the advisor's role, chapter composition, and chapter activities.

Advisor's Role:

In response to a question which asked "what is your role in the school or community?", twenty-eight percent (44) responded as being a counselor, almost twenty-seven (42) were School Resource Officers (SROs) (specially trained certified law enforcement officers who work in schools), twenty-four percent (38) responded as being a teacher and the remainder identified themselves as parent volunteers and "other" nonspecific roles. When asked "how long they had served as a S.A.V.E. advisor?", the responses ranged from one month to ten years.

S.A.V.E. advisors, along with their primary responsibilities at their school, responded with a modal number of two hours for the number of hours per week they work with S.A.V.E. There was also another modal number of two when asked "how many times they had contact with the Center for the Prevention of School Violence?".

A modal number of two was the response to a question which asked "how many parents are involved with your S.A.V.E. chapter?". Advisors indicated that some parents participate in the following ways: assisting with trips, meetings, and school/community projects; raising funds; and contributing money.

Chapter Composition:

Of those S.A.V.E. advisors who responded, approximately twelve percent (16,427) of enrolled students (139,586) in their schools are S.A.V.E. members with higher S.A.V.E. membership percentages manifested at the elementary level because it is more often pursued as a whole-school initiative. The percentage of involvement decreases in middle and high schools because S.A.V.E. is usually pursued as an extra-curricular activity, and students have more choice about activities in which they participate.

When asked about the demographics of their S.A.V.E. chapters, advisors responded that fifty-nine percent (8,793) of chapter members are White, thirty-two percent (4,825) are African American, three percent (473) are Hispanic American, almost three percent (423) are Native American, and almost two percent (289) are Asian American. Advisors respond that sixty-one percent (8,338) of S.A.V.E. chapter members are female and almost thirty-nine percent (5,255) are male.

In response to a question which asked, "do S.A.V.E. chapter members tend to be members of other school organizations?", almost eighty-two percent (130) responded "yes." Some of these other clubs are as follows:

- Student Government
- Athletics
- SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions)

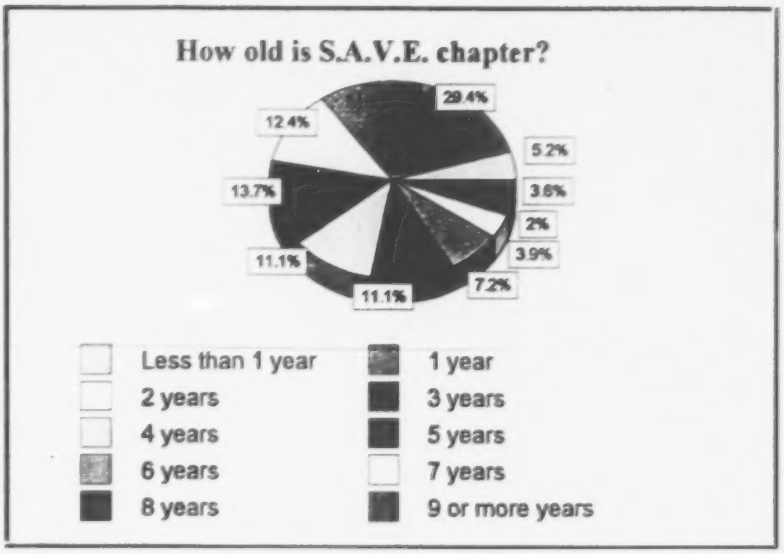
S.A.V.E. Chapter Activity:

Almost ninety-three percent (154) of S.A.V.E. advisors responded that their chapters were very active. Seven percent (12) reported that their chapter were inactive for the following reasons:

- Lack of time available of advisors
- Lack of advisors
- Just now getting started

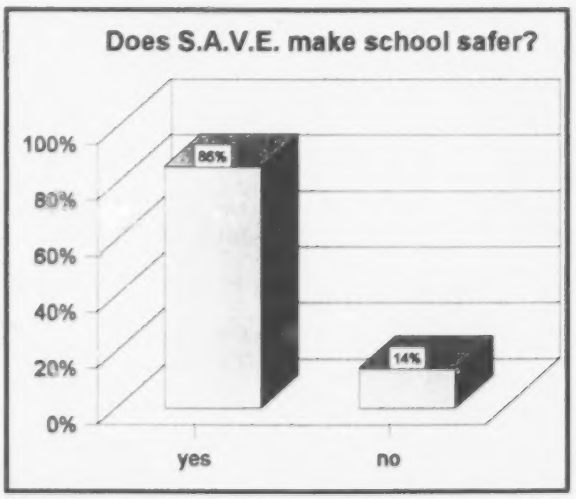
When asked if the S.A.V.E. chapter was being implemented in the 2000-2001 school year, eighty-two percent (132) responded "yes."

In response to a question which asked, "how old is your S.A.V.E. chapter?", answers ranged from less than one year to more than nine years. Five percent (8) responded less than one year, twenty-nine percent (45) said one year, twelve percent (19) said two years, almost fourteen percent (21) said three years, eleven percent (17) percent said four and five years, seven percent (11) said six years, almost four percent (6) said seven years, two percent (3) said eight years, and almost four percent (6) said more than nine years.



When asked "does S.A.V.E. make your school a safer place?" eighty-six percent (86) responded "yes." The evidence that the advisors provided to prove that S.A.V.E. makes schools safer includes the following:

- Decreases in fights
- Decreases in office referrals
- Increase in awareness of problems that may occur in future
- Overall better attitude to stop violence



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In response to a question which asked, "which of the following components do you use in your S.A.V.E. chapter?", responses cited by majorities of advisors included service learning projects, guest speakers, and conflict management/peer mediation. The following detailed breakdown was obtained from advisors:

COMPONENTS TO S.A.V.E.

Activities	%	n
Service Learning Projects	71.1	123
Guest Speakers	66.5	115
Conflict Management/Peer Mediation	58.4	101
Other Violence Prevention Programs	25.4	44
Peer Helper	24.9	43
SADD	22.0	38
Gun Safety Programs	19.7	34
Mentoring Program	18.5	32
Other Educational Programs	18.5	32
WAVE	16.2	28
Teen Court	12.7	22
Student Court	3.5	6

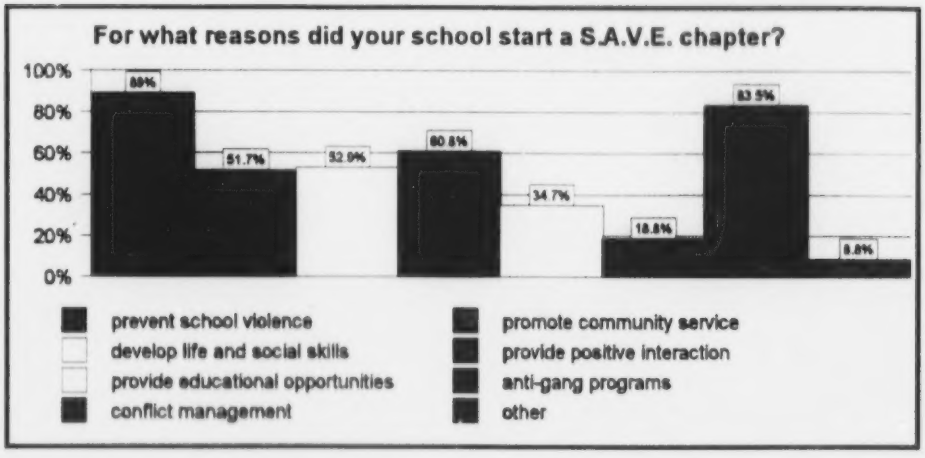
Some of the "other violence prevention programs" that were listed by the advisors are: DARE; dating violence; Red Ribbon week; and Prom Promise. Alongside this, "other educational programs" that were listed are: "Let's Get Real About Violence;" presentations to elementary schools; and videos.

S.A.V.E. advisors were also asked "how often did their S.A.V.E. chapter meet?" Almost eighteen percent (29) responded once a week, four percent (7) responded twice a week, thirty-seven percent (61) responded once a month, and thirty-two percent (53) responded twice a month. Other responses were: "when necessary to complete projects;" "three times a month;" and "every two months."

The time of day that S.A.V.E. advisors responded with regard to holding meetings is as follows: almost fifty-two percent (89) said after school; forty-seven percent (81) responded during school; fourteen percent (24) said before school; and almost five percent (8) said they held meetings on the weekends. The modal number of students who are typically in attendance at S.A.V.E. meetings is thirty.

When asked "how S.A.V.E. chapters recruit new members?", the following responses were given: almost sixty-six percent (113) responded personal communication; fifty-four percent (93) responded awareness campaigns; almost thirty-five percent (60) responded media announcements; and twenty percent (35)

responded school assembly. Twenty-six percent (45) of the advisors responded "other," which included announcements, teacher recommendations, school newsletters, and lunchroom sign-up table.



When asked, "for what reasons did your school start a S.A.V.E. chapter?", the S.A.V.E. advisors had various responses. Eighty-nine percent (153) said to prevent school violence; almost eighty-four percent (142) responded to encourage peaceful methods for conflict management; sixty-one percent (104) responded to provide opportunities for positive social interactions; almost fifty-three percent (91) said to develop life / social skills; and almost fifty-two percent (89) said to promote community service. Responses also included almost thirty-five percent (59) indicating that S.A.V.E. provides educational opportunities about the problems associated with substance abuse and almost nineteen percent (32) said to establish effective anti-gang programs. "Other" responses that were indicated include student interests, incident at school, and part of school improvement.

In response to a question which asked "who initiated the creation of your S.A.V.E. chapter?", almost twenty-five percent (31) responded the counselor; twenty-four percent (30) indicated an administrator; twenty-three percent (29) responded saying a School Resource Officer; almost ten percent (12) said a teacher; and eight percent (10) responded that a student initiated the chapter. Ten percent (13) of advisors reported "other" which includes school social worker, Safe and Drug Free School Coordinator, and a safe schools coordinator.

When asked, "what outside resources were used to implement your S.A.V.E. chapter?", advisors responded as follows: almost seventy-three percent (124) used the Center for the Prevention of School Violence's S.A.V.E. manual; thirty percent (51) used the Center for the Prevention of School Violence's elementary S.A.V.E. manual; almost twenty-five percent (42) received information from Center staff and web site; almost twenty-two percent (37) used an individual with prior S.A.V.E. experience; almost twelve percent (20) used another school; eleven percent (19) used the "www.nationalsave.org" web site; almost eight percent (13) used a local business; and ten percent (17) used other outside resources such as a sheriff's department, Internet, and S.A.V.E. video.

In response to a question which asked "how does your chapter obtain financial support?", advisors responded with the following: almost sixty-three percent (107) said fund raising; almost twenty-two percent (37) said grant funding; fifteen percent (26) responded saying a community sponsor; almost eleven percent

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(18) said the PTA; almost three percent (5) said a corporate sponsor; and almost twenty-six percent (44) responded "other" which included S.A.V.E. dues, donations, personal spending, and Safe and Drug Free Schools funding.

When asked "how does your chapter spend its funds?", advisors responded: fifty-two percent (89) bought promotional materials; forty-eight percent (82) worked on service learning projects; almost forty-three percent (73) used funds for operating expenses; almost twenty-eight percent (47) said the Center for the Prevention of School Violence annual S.A.V.E. summit attendance; almost twenty-four percent (40) said charitable donations; ten percent (17) said scholarships; and eleven percent (19) responded "other" which included field trips, community outreach programs, and speakers.

In response to a question which asked "what resources can the Center for the Prevention of School Violence offer to support your chapter?", advisors said the following: eighty-six percent (147) said materials; eighty-one percent (139) said programs; and fifteen percent (26) said "other" which included speakers, donations, grant funding, and new ideas.

When asked "what is the biggest challenge to your chapter's success?", advisors in large numbers cited obtaining financial resources and maintaining student involvement. The following detailed breakdown was obtained from advisors:

CHALLENGES TO S.A.V.E. SUCCESS

Challenges	%	n
Financial resources	46.8	80
Student involvement	41.5	71
Parental involvement	29.2	50
Program materials	26.9	46
Business involvement	21.1	36
Community support	16.6	29
Administrative support	15.2	26
Other	17.5	30

Some of the "other" responses were scheduling, time, coordinating with in-school personnel, logistics of working with a large group, and school location.

Questionnaire Results - Bivariate Analysis

In an effort to determine if grade level or age of chapter made any difference in the responses of advisors, these variables were crosstabulated with other questions to conduct additional statistical analysis. Grade level – elementary, middle, and high school – was used to determine if differences among grade levels with regard to how S.A.V.E. is implemented exist. Age of chapter with "newer chapter" defined as two years or less was used to determine if any differences exist between chapters which were established after the violent incident at Columbine High School in Colorado and those which are older.

Grade Level:

Because of developmental differences in students as well as an intended difference in the way S.A.V.E. is approached at the elementary level, differences when comparing elementary, middle, and high school S.A.V.E. were anticipated. For example, the number of students involved in S.A.V.E. at the elementary level reflects that elementary S.A.V.E. is often pursued as a whole-school effort. Likewise, S.A.V.E. at the elementary level tends to be pursued during the school day rather than before or after school.

Another difference that is of interest but is not surprising is that more advisors at the middle and high school levels responded that middle and high school S.A.V.E. students are involved in other school organizations; elementary school students do not tend to be involved in a great number of school organizations.

More elementary chapters are new chapters with many having been started in the last two years. This may reflect the success of the Center for the Prevention of School Violence's emphasis of elementary S.A.V.E. over the past two years. Important to note, however, is that growth in the number of S.A.V.E. chapters over the past two years has occurred at all levels.

With regard to activities, while service learning projects and guest speakers are popular at the middle and high school levels, conflict management and crime prevention (gun safety) projects more often occur at the elementary level.

Because the nature of elementary S.A.V.E. is infusion into existing school safety efforts, recruitment of members tends not to be a major effort. Students are included in whole-school elementary S.A.V.E. without recruitment.

Motivation for the initiation of the S.A.V.E. approach shows some variation between elementary and middle/high schools with preventing school violence and developing life and social skills of primary importance at the elementary level and those plus other reasons (e.g., promoting community service and establishing an effective anti-gang message) evidenced at the middle/high school levels.

School counselors and teachers tend to initiate S.A.V.E. more at the elementary level than at the middle and high school levels. Administrators tend to initiate S.A.V.E. in equal amounts across the levels. School Resource Officers initiate equally at the middle and high school levels, and students are evidenced as initiators at the high school level.

Fund raising for S.A.V.E. tends to occur at the high school level while PTA involvement is more in evidence at the elementary and middle school levels. The challenges associated with the implementation of S.A.V.E. also differ between elementary and middle/high school levels likely because the nature of implementation is so very different. Generally, no one challenge is emphasized at the elementary level while obtaining financial support and maintaining student involvement are identified at the middle and high school levels.

Overall, the difference in implementation between the elementary level and middle/high school levels is verified by examining across the grade levels. This examination reveals the noted difference at the elementary level; it also, however, determines few differences between middle and high school implementation.

Age of Chapter:

The murderous rampage at Columbine High School prompted many schools and communities to address school safety with efforts which they had not before pursued. S.A.V.E. experienced an increased interest from these schools and communities and, as a result, has grown in number and spread throughout the United States. Chapters established after Columbine essentially are two years old or less and are considered "newer" chapters; those older than two years are considered "older" chapters. Just under a majority of the responding advisors work with newer chapters. Age of chapter was crosstabulated with questions to determine if any differences exist between newer and older chapters.

Advisors for newer chapters, obviously, have fewer years experience as advisors. Counselors seem to be involved more often with newer chapters in comparison to older chapters. There is little difference in the amount of time per week spent on S.A.V.E. between newer and older chapters nor is there a difference in the amount of contacts with the Center for the Prevention of School Violence.

Age of chapter does not appear to impact the number of members in the chapter nor whether the chapter is active or inactive. As might be expected, however, newer chapters were less likely to respond that S.A.V.E. has made their schools "safer." Length of implementation, certainly, makes a difference as to whether or not enough time has passed for the potential of S.A.V.E. to be fostered.

Other questions concerning projects, activities, recruitment, resources, and challenges reveal few differences between newer and older chapters, and some of the differences which do exist are likely explained by grade level analysis rather than age of chapter. For example, age of chapter appears to make a difference with regard to chapter initiation with administrators initiating more of the newer chapters. However, School Resource Officers appear in greater numbers to have initiated older chapters – likely reflecting grade level and School Resource Officer presence at the high school level dating back into the early 1990s.

Overall, age of chapter does not appear to be a strong explanatory variable for S.A.V.E. Few differences emerge between newer and older chapters.

Open-ended Questions: Some Interesting Findings

In addition to the responses to the close-ended questions, advisors were given the opportunity to share specific information about their S.A.V.E. chapters through open-ended questions or questions that gave them the choice of "other" and the opportunity to provide additional information. Questions answered gave insight into the unique activities, projects, and contributions that S.A.V.E. chapters sponsor or use to promote the interest and growth of the S.A.V.E. chapters. Advisors also shared information about the use of S.A.V.E. chapter funds, the biggest challenges for the success of S.A.V.E. chapters, and how the Center for the Prevention of School Violence could better assist them.

Advisors indicated that S.A.V.E. rallies, the Center for the Prevention of School Violence's annual S.A.V.E. summit, and school pledges to nonviolence as well as school participation in Red Ribbon week were the most important activities that promoted interest in S.A.V.E. In addition, S.A.V.E. advisors identified programs or specific designated times that brought awareness to the efforts of the S.A.V.E. chapters. For instance, the seat belt awareness program or selected weeks for nonviolence awareness, such as Safe Schools Week, were shown to promote the efforts of S.A.V.E. chapters. Advisors also indicated that students who were involved with conflict resolution and/or peer mediation were students drawn to involvement in S.A.V.E. chapters.

Awareness of school nonviolence and peer mediation were reported as two of the most important contributions of S.A.V.E. chapters to their schools. Advisors also reported outreach into their communities through donations of money and food to organizations who work with those affected by violence, such as shelters for domestic violence victims, as ways S.A.V.E. chapters have contributed to the well being of their schools and communities.

The implementation of S.A.V.E. chapters was reported to have a positive impact on school safety. S.A.V.E. advisors indicated that, with the implementation of S.A.V.E., the number of student fights and office referrals as well as the need of peer mediation had decreased. Advisors also reported that S.A.V.E. chapters brought an increase in the awareness of problems that may occur in the future, an increase in peer mediation due to the decrease in fights, and an increase in the overall attitude of nonviolence. With S.A.V.E. in their schools, advisors reported students had voiced that they felt safer and increased positive behavior when interacting with peers.

For S.A.V.E. chapters that have funds to spend provided through the collection of S.A.V.E. dues, donations, and/or fund-raising, advisors reported spending on projects, field trips, and community outreach programs. Advisors also indicated that funds were spent on guest speakers and incentives (e.g., S.A.V.E. t-shirts) for students.

In addition to responses about challenges that were obtained from closed-ended questions, time was the biggest challenge to chapter success cited in open-ended responses reported by advisors. Advisors indicated that finding the time in their schedule or a time when all students could gather was difficult. Advisors also reiterated in open-ended responses that communicating and maintaining student involvement and enthusiasm were challenging.

Advisors reported several ways that the Center for the Prevention of School Violence could offer support to S.A.V.E. chapters. Advisors indicated interest in resources such as qualified guest speakers, Internet sites, donations of any types, workshops, and information about grant opportunities. Another suggestion was materials, such as an advisor resource handbook, with suggested chapter activities as well as strategies for obtaining financial resources. Advisors also indicated that they would like a resource guide that allows them to review and evaluate their S.A.V.E. chapters.

Recommendations

The S.A.V.E. profile generated by the Center for the Prevention of School Violence allows several recommendations to be made with regard to S.A.V.E. These recommendations involve suggestions specifically about the S.A.V.E. chapters themselves with reference to some of the profile information that was obtained, best practices for S.A.V.E. chapter operation, and the promotion of S.A.V.E. chapter growth.

Chapters:

•Chapter advisors would benefit from more training. Many advisors have been serving their chapters for little over a year. The challenges of sustaining a chapter after the first year's enthusiasm wanes need to be addressed.

•S.A.V.E. advisor training needs to be diversified. Several advisors have more than one role in the school or community. Advisors indicated roles such as counselors, teachers, and School Resource Officers. These roles should be taken into account in the training that is provided.

•More involvement with other school and community activities by S.A.V.E. chapters appears warranted. Advisors indicated that the great majority of students are involved with other school and community activities. Through other groups, S.A.V.E. can pass on the message of nonviolence. Additionally, many high school chapters are known for taking the S.A.V.E. message to middle and elementary school chapters. This type of collaboration should be promoted.

Best Practices:

•The success of the curriculum approach at the elementary level speaks well for the use of such an approach with middle and high school S.A.V.E. Development of curriculum for secondary use should be explored.

•S.A.V.E. chapters should adapt a varied approach in the effort to prevent violence. Only a few chapters have implemented other violence prevention programs such as conflict resolution and peer mediation. S.A.V.E. should employ, as the research increasingly supports, multiple strategies which are supportive of student involvement in safe school efforts.

•The two most often mentioned challenges, obtaining financial resources and maintaining student involvement, need to be explored further so that the best avenues to attain success with each are identified and developed.

Promotion of S.A.V.E. Chapter Growth:

•Recruitment efforts should be expanded. Advisors indicated that the majority of recruitment relies heavily on personal communication. At a minimum, materials should be developed to be used in these personal appeals. Beyond such appeals, more elaborate recruitment strategies should be developed. Awareness campaign materials to be employed in such strategies should be generated.

•Implementation of S.A.V.E. chapters should be proactive. S.A.V.E. chapters should be created as part of an effort to prevent violence in schools and communities. Many chapters in the profile are part of the increase in chapter establishment after the Columbine High School incident. Although this is good from the standpoint of S.A.V.E. development, chapter establishment that is reactive to incidents should not be relied upon in strategies that are being developed to increase the number of S.A.V.E. chapters.

•The requests for technical assistance articulated by advisors evidence a need to enhance the capacity of S.A.V.E.'s support structure. Although the Center for the Prevention of School Violence to date has been able to meet this need as S.A.V.E.'s national clearinghouse, as S.A.V.E. grows, a national support structure which focuses upon the development of local supports for S.A.V.E. chapters should be established.

Conclusion

The profile of S.A.V.E. chapters developed by the Center for the Prevention of School Violence offers baseline information about S.A.V.E. chapters. It specifically provides information about S.A.V.E. advisor roles, chapter composition, and chapter activity. The profile also provides information about the differences among elementary, middle, and high school applications of S.A.V.E. as well as differences between newer and older S.A.V.E. chapters. It offers some interesting insights from the S.A.V.E. advisor perspective and allows recommendations about chapters, best practices, and S.A.V.E. growth to be put forth. Overall, it enables the Center to have an enhanced understanding of S.A.V.E.

The Center for the Prevention of School Violence intends to continue to further enhance its understanding of S.A.V.E. and follow up on several aspects of the profile with more in-depth analysis, research, and assessment. Such follow up should provide additional information about how S.A.V.E. can continue its growth and efforts towards school violence prevention. Additional efforts put forth with regard to the development of the S.A.V.E. profile, particularly enhancing response rate so that greater confidence in the representative of the results exists, will also be pursued in the future. Overall, these efforts will enable S.A.V.E. to promote school safety through student involvement which fosters school connectedness and meaningful participation.

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